PROFILES

AH, PACKAGES!

TO James E. Casey, the president of the United Parcel Service, there is no such thing as an ugly package. In Casey's eyes, all packages are objects of beauty. The average man looks at a package and wonders what the hell is inside. Casey doesn't care. He is interested in the package only as a package—the wrapping paper, the string, the address label, the man who delivers it, the truck in which it is delivered, the elapsed time from store to customer. Casey is a tall, spare man of fifty-nine, with high cheekbones and, most of the time, a rigidly detached expression. Ordinarily taciturn and moody, he becomes animated in the presence of packages. "Anybody can deliver a package," he says periodically, as if to disclaim possessing special package-delivering talent, but he does not believe it. His devotion to the problem of getting packages where they are supposed to go has carried him, and several hundred million packages, a considerable distance. Casey delivered his first package in 1899, when he was eleven, for a Seattle department store. Today, he is known in parcel circles as the Nation's No. 1 Consolidated Delivery Man, and he is nothing less than that. His firm delivers packages for practically all the department stores and specialty shops in seventeen cities around the country. In New York, United Parcel delivers them for more than four hundred stores, including every big department store in town. One hundred million packages are distributed annually by United Parcel trucks throughout the nation. In New York alone, at the height of the Christmas season, a half-million packages a day flow in and out of the trucks and along the sorting belts of the United Parcel Service; seventy-five thousand C.O.D.s are sometimes collected in a single day. Late in 1946, the company delivered its thousand millionth, or billionth, bundle. "We had a good idea," Casey frequently says, "and it grew."

OVER the years, Casey has taken what might look to outsiders like the simple job of handling and delivering packages and turned it into a semi-religious rite. He employs twenty-eight hundred men in New York, as well as thirty-two hundred elsewhere, and he tries to imbue each of them with the sacredness of his individual task. Drivers, for example, are governed by a series of regulations that could easily be mistaken for the house rules of a Tibetan monastery. A "Manual of Instructions" exhorts them to be "courteous, well-behaved gentlemen." They must "not scuffle or engage in loud talk." They are forbidden to "whistle or yell at people on the street or in other cars." They must not "walk or drive over the customer's lawn or garden." Considerable self-control must be exercised. "Never act as though you are impatient when you ring the bell or knock at the door," says one rule. "A gentle ring or knock makes a more favorable impression . . . and usually brings a response more promptly than a hard knock or a long ring." Chivalry is imperative: "If a lady comes to the door to receive the package, lift or remove your cap. Always mention the name of the store from which the package was sent. , Some customers are sensitive about receiving packages C.O.D., especially if guests are present. . . . In order not to embarrass customers, C.O.D. amounts should be announced in a low tone of voice." The customer is never wrong: "If a customer should make a cutting or irritable remark . . . reply only with utmost courtesy." During the Christmas season, a certain amount of deceit is practiced in the interest of better service. Christmas toys are delivered swathed in blankets, in case the young recipient himself opens the door and becomes snoopy. "Run along, sonny," the driver is instructed to say, in effect, "and tell Mama that the new lampshade has arrived." If the mother isn't at home, the driver either leaves the gift with someone else or returns with it the following day.

The United Parcel householder has, in an informal way, immense privileges. Some weeks ago, a driver delivered a package approximately one inch high and two inches square to a Brooklyn address. Before he got away, he had been persuaded to return a half-dozen beer bottles to a delicatessen around the corner and had rearranged the apartment's furniture, shifting a five-piece dining-room set to the living room and a five-piece living-room set to the dining room. The United Parcel management doesn't officially encourage the returning of beer bottles by its delivery men, but since the rule book tells the men to be "alert, friendly, courteous, ambitious, efficient" and reminds them that "THE BIG IDEA IS TO GIVE SERVICE," this driver performed these chores with as much grace as he could muster. A while back, a lady in the Bronx opened her apartment door, accepted a bundle containing a toothbrush and a bottle of shampoo, told the driver to sit down in her living room, and read him passages from a long novel she was working on. A housewife in the Village, receiving a Gimbel package, gave every indication of being about to burst into tears. "Anything wrong, Madam?" the driver inquired. The lady explained that she had been married the week before and was baking her first cake, for her husband's birthday, though she didn't know even the fundamentals of the process. Her husband, she said, had been complaining bitterly about her cooking, and she was afraid that a bad cake, or no cake at all, might prove decisive. The driver, a more than ordinarily versatile United man, rattled off his wife's recipe for angel-food cake and expressed regret that he could not spare the time to bake it himself. Another driver delivered a package containing six white shirts to an apartment house in Fleetwood. "What size are you?" asked the housewife. "Fourteen-and-a-half neck, thirty-two sleeve, Madam," said the driver. "My husband's size," she said, opening the package. "Would you mind trying these on to make sure they're right?" All six shirts were perfect fits. Last summer, in New Rochelle, a United Parcel man delivering a hatbox was met at the door of a house by a hysterical woman. "Snake in the yard!" she shouted. The driver beamed. "As

AIR LINER

Man has devised his clumsiest claptrap
In this machine—a boxcar with a wing,
A wing in which lie bolted and concealed
Two automobiles, or four. Electric fans
Of monstrous size project. Up in the nose
The pilot squats, the brain of the insect.
The rudder, most ridiculous fin, sticks up
Behind, a kind of billboard. Nothing fits.

But suddenly the fans are on, a gale
Begins beneath the wheels; pivoting,
We gawk and turkey-trot to the wide road
Laid out for this, and, pausing, gather strength
For the grand leap. Earth flows to a blur,
The senses roar and, multiplying might,
Lean to the onrush, tilting up the tail,
Straining to lift us, blunder us upstairs.

Without delay we fly. The bottom drops
Out of the world, and houses shrink to scale;
River and town slow to a walking pace,
Nursery objects, models for a war
Upon a general's table. Why are we bored?
Why is it nothing new? And is there no
Sensation of the height? It's getting cold,
It slips, it skids, it bumps us like a truck.

Outside, the wind is pulling bits of cloud
From infinite wool fields. Suddenly we are blind,
Wrapped in cocoons of nothingness far over
The ever-lost, the ever-wished-for earth.
Our boxcar drifts from time, and in the front
A small door opens and reveals a man
At a typewriter—writing what, to whom?
Soon we must die or plunge to death or freeze.

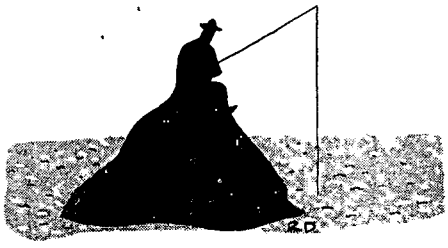
One with his dials and clocks is hauling us
Like fools around the firmament, and one
Sits at a sky desk writing. Both are mad,
Both are the baggagemen of our good souls.
And yet we trust the young and lunatic
Mechanics with our lives, who should have been
Bus drivers shifting gears from street to street,
Nodding good morning, chewing, making change.

Oh, reap the brilliants of the sky and climb,
Truck-driver poet! Your secret name I know,
You and your awkward bird with gilded beak;
Your pitiable, unbending hawk; your iron,
Soaring eagle. Man with the strength of hand
To hold these tons of flesh and steel aloft,
You are the white Icarian arm of man's
Escape from man into the electric sun.

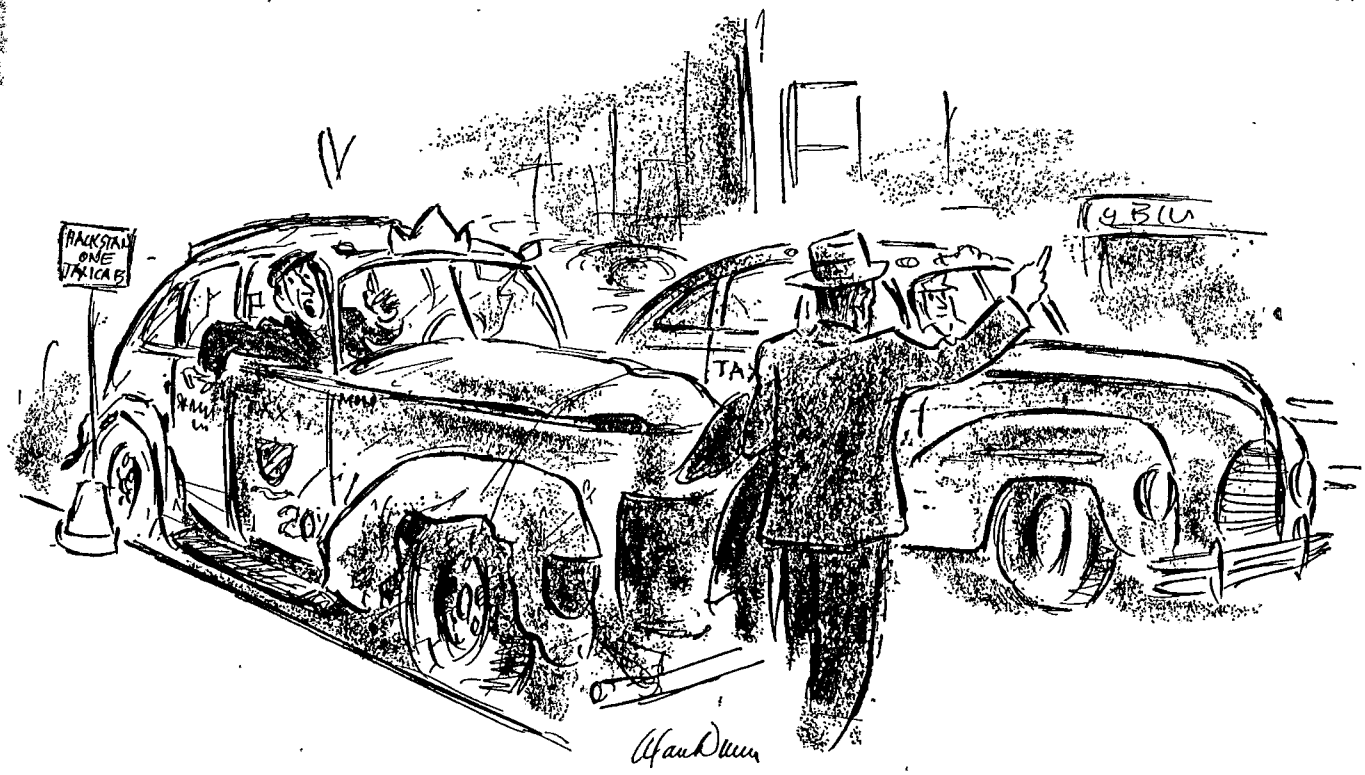
—KARL SHAPIRO

all the developments of the strike, and he even turned up one evening at a meeting of the strikers at the Capitol Hotel and made a characteristically brief speech. "We've had strikes before. We've won 'em when we've been right, we've lost 'em when we've been wrong," he said, and then sat down. Casey fancies himself a stern man to deal with, but he is reported to have remarked from time to time during the final negotiations, "Living costs have gone up; the boys have got to eat."

CASEY's life is devoted almost entirely to packages. "Casey *is* a package," a retail-store manager who has known him for years has said. He maintains cordial, if somewhat austere, relations with his clients, most of whom admire him and consider him a fair, if hard, trader. He lunches every so often with the heads of stores he serves. Aside from ordering his meal, he talks only about packages. "Casey once told me that he has never drunk a glass of milk in his life," the head of a large department store said recently, "and I thought for a minute he might stop talking about those goddam packages and tell me why he'd never drunk a glass of milk. But no! He went right into night loading operations in Chicago." At United Parcel's executive offices, which are in the company's huge central distribution station, which occupies the whole block front on First Avenue between Thirty-eighth and Thirty-ninth Streets, Casey works in a stark room containing only a green metal desk, several chairs, and a coat tree. Except for a few papers and a small metal model of a United Parcel truck, his desk is bare. His door is never closed. He endlessly studies reports of delivery operations, often poring over them long after his associates have gone home. It was while doing this that he happened to notice, several years ago, that street addresses were being written out in full on the "route sheets," the lists of packages assigned to each truck for delivery. Casey sent out an order to start using abbreviations, thus probably saving several hundred man-hours a year. Last year, to save paper, he redesigned the route sheet and got eighty names on each one instead of forty. His pronouncements are presented with the dignity of a papal bull. The document on abbreviations, for example, is entitled "The Modification of the Sheet-Writing Operation."



In his spare time, Casey has been known to stroll through department stores, winding up in the wrapping room, where, with unflagging enthusiasm, he watches parcels being wrapped. To Casey, there is nothing more interesting than the wrapping of a parcel, unless it is the delivery of a parcel. He once accompanied a man who has no feelings one way or the other about packages on a tour of a client's store. Before long, he steered the man to the wrapping room. Casey's eyes sparkled and he began to twitch. "Deft fingers!" he said. "Deft fingers wrapping thousands of bundles. Neatly tied! Neatly addressed! Stuffed with soft tissue paper! What a treat! Ah, packages!" Casey often visits one of United Parcel's many local delivery stations, and he sometimes gently suggests how to straighten out a tangle of parcels on a moving belt or looks inside trucks to see how the parcels are stacked. On one such visit, he stood by as a station supervisor assembled a group of drivers and package sorters and examined their shoeshines and haircuts. "The spokes of our wheel spell service," Casey said at the end of the inspection, and departed. Every Monday evening, the officials of the United Parcel Service gather in his office for a discussion of the past



week's problems. Casey, who looks like a professor of economics at a Midwestern college, conducts the sessions in seminar fashion. He urges everyone to speak his piece, and acts mostly as moderator. A meeting a few months ago was devoted to considering the advisability of lowering the cab floor of trucks two feet, so that a driver weighing a hundred and fifty pounds who stepped into the cab two hundred times a day would save himself sixty thousand foot-pounds of energy. Casey listened attentively to the arguments pro and con, interrupting occasionally to ask; "Will this gum things up?" or to observe that "Things will get worse before they get better." He closed the meeting with a shrug. "That's your baby," he said to the officials, smiling, and went home. "I don't do anything," he sometimes says. "I'm just the president. The boys operate the business. I'm just a spoke in the wheel."

Casey, a bachelor, lives at the Waldorf Towers, in a two-room suite furnished almost as simply as his office. It contains a Capehart phonograph, some Danish figurines his mother gave him, and a scattering of orthodox landscapes, mostly Western. The sole decoration in his bedroom is an etching of a mule over his bed. Casey found the picture in a Third Avenue antique shop and bought it for two dollars. He says it reminds him of his early days in Nevada. He has always feared that his colleagues would feel that he was becoming self-important, and for many years he lived in a single room at the Barclay. When he decided that he wanted to live at the Waldorf Towers, he went from office to office at United Parcel, seeking approval of the change. "You sure you won't think I'm snooty?" he asked. "You sure it's O.K. and not too ritzy?" He allows himself few luxuries. He owns a large Packard, which he drives himself. He enjoys going into Westchester or New Jersey for a Sunday spin and recording the time it takes him to reach, say, Mount Vernon or Paterson. On Monday, back in the office, he checks his figures against the running time allotted United Parcel trucks that cover the same routes.

Casey has attempted to keep his executives as package-conscious as he is, and they have a keen sense of their mission to make everything nice and comfortable for packages. "When Jim Casey offers a suggestion to improve the delivery of toys for kiddies at the Yule season, my heart swells with pride at the privilege of being associated with such a humanitarian venture," one official humbly told a friend. Broadly defined, a U.P.S. executive is a man who plays golf on a private course, refers to Mr. Casey as Jim, says "vehicle" for "truck," and never swears on the job. U.P.S. executives sometimes slip, of course, under stress, but this is looked upon charitably. As one of them recently remarked about another, "He's a terribly fine fellow, even if he does use an occasional damn." The executives who work for Casey recognize his undisputed preëminence in the complicated world of bundles, and treat him with a mixture of affection and respect not generally lavished upon the living. More than a dozen of his top associates have been with him over a quarter of a century and have risen from the ranks. One of his vice-presidents, for example, a bright, agreeable man named Bert Meyer, entered Casey's orbit in 1915, running errands for him after school in Seattle. Fred N. Iverson, the manager of United Parcel activities in Chicago, began his package career as a driver. Willard Bixby, a vice-president in charge of the firm's fleet of vehicles and its maintenance, has been in his time a car washer, a driver's helper, and a driver.

There are many rules for the conduct of United Parcel executives, too, all contained in what is known as the Policy Book. An executive without his Policy Book would be like Admiral Byrd without his compass. Ignorance of such rules as "We observe the laws and employ good legal advisers," "We do not enter any city until we are assured of having a substantial delivery volume," and "We do not smoke in other people's offices until invited to do so" could conceivably be disastrous. The Policy Book offers students of corporate activities an insight into the dual personality of a large enterprise: on the one hand, an extraordinary attention to details of business (basic rates, specialty-shop minimum rates, vehicle paint) and on the other hand, intrusion of business into a man's personal affairs, which is evidenced by such

we all say at U.P.S., the spokes of our wheel spell service," he announced. He killed the snake with a broom handle.

THE vast tangle of United Parcel Service rules and regulations is merely one result of Casey's attempt to provide the best of all possible delivery men in the best of all possible package worlds. The sight of dirt makes him ill. Dirt, therefore, has no place in his business. "I would rather go down on a clean liner than on a dirty freighter," he has often said, on dry land, while gazing wrathfully at a United Parcel truck with mud on its wheels. The company has seventeen hundred vehicles in New York alone, and all of them are washed every night. Some seventy-five of the vehicles are electrics, assigned to short runs in the upper East Side residential section of Manhattan. They rarely travel more than six or seven miles a day. "We could use a horse and buggy on those routes," Casey says, "but electrics last forever." Except for Railway Express, the Ward Baking Company, and several dowagers wearing choker collars, United Parcel is almost the last remaining operator of electrics in town.

Casey is an impeccable dresser. He owns a wardrobe of thirty suits, with ties and socks to match them all. The official wardrobe of his drivers, which is less extensive, is an ensemble of brown pants and shirt, with which goes a lightweight brown blouse in summer and a heavy reefer in winter. The whole thing is topped by a brown cap with a gilt badge bearing a brown eagle and the message "Safe, Swift, Sure." Applicants for United Parcel jobs must, first of all, impress a personnel man with their neatness and courtesy. If they pass muster on those counts, they are subjected to intelligence tests. No one at United Parcel, least of all Casey, is searching for a genius-type delivery man. The personnel department has discovered that high-scoring applicants are inclined to be temperamental and to mislay their bundles. Assuming that the results of an applicant's test place him somewhere in the broad category between wizard and idiot, and that a job is available, he is hired.

A man who gets a job at United Parcel finds that his education has just begun. The leisure hours of an employee are supposed to be crowded with self-improvement projects. In addition to studying the Manual, he devours articles in *The Big Idea*, the United house organ, which deals with such topics as "Power Prover Proves Proper Power," "Taking a Slap at Piston Slap," "Getting After Mr. Emergency," and "No More Fuel Pump Failures." He studies a series of small illustrated cards admonishing him to "Check and DOUBLE-Check: Are your shoes shined? Is your hair cut? Are you clean shaven? Are your hands clean? Is your uniform pressed?" or "Tear off C.O.D. stubs cleanly" or "Always LOCK your car!" or "Remember to ALWAYS say 'Good Morning' and 'Good Afternoon.' " The education of a driver continues even in the cab of his vehicle. Another card, one of a series that is changed every week, looks up at him from the dashboard to remind him, for instance, that:

"A" means Alert which our drivers should be:
Keep your eyes on the road
And be accident-free!

Or:

"D" stands for Doorway
That's where the sale ends—
And that's where our drivers
Can *make* and *keep* friends!

Or:

"Z" is for Zealous
Which describes U.P. men:
The best crowd on earth—
And let's all say "Amen!"

Occasionally the employees interrupt this educational process and call a strike. The most recent strike, which occurred locally in the fall of 1946 and was complicated by a jurisdictional dispute, lasted fifty-one days, during which time not a parcel was delivered by the best crowd on earth. The matter, settled in time for Christmas deliveries, resulted in a substantial wage increase for the men. Casey kept in close touch with

"You mean you already have signs that say 'Idlewild' right in stock!"

"He's had a brilliant career. Doctor of Arts from Munich University, Prix de Rome fellowship, gold medal from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Carnegie prize, Pepsi-Cola award . . ."

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maxims as "We demand of all our people a high standard of morality. . . . Their private lives should be above reproach. . . . In order to uphold the dignity of themselves and of this company it is absolutely essential that all of our executives wear neat, well-kept clothes. . . . Executives should be careful to keep clothes, shoes, and linen immaculately clean. Careful attention should be given to haircuts, shaves, and particularly to clean teeth and clean fingernails." Many of the executives' conferences are concerned with the problems of what is known as "human engineering." They are urged to read H. A. Overstreet's "Let Me Think" and D. A. Laird's "The Technique of Building Personal Leadership." A multitude of technical problems is discussed: the relative merits of a car-wash rack and of just dousing the cars with water, finding buried talent in the organization, getting along with the union, and the supervision and training of drivers of furniture trucks. Casey brought a conference of delivery-station managers last year to a close by reminding his associates that "We do not have a monopoly in the delivery business. We do not have any patents or exclusive rights to best methods. . . . Anybody can deliver packages. . . . The only thing we can have to offer that others will not always have is *quality*." Everyone then rose to his feet and joined in a hearty rendition of the company anthem, to the tune of the "Field Artillery March":

Over hill, over dale
As they hit the concrete trail
  Our brown wagons go rolling along.
Shout it out, without doubt
Service rides on every route
  As our wagons go rolling along.
Then it's hi hi hee
In the brown-shirt cavalry
  Shout out our message loud and strong.
Where'er you go
You will always know
  Our brown wagons go rolling along.

THE future Package King was delivered on March 29, 1888, in the little town of Candelaria, Nevada, the first of four children. His father, whose chronic bad health kept him moving from place to place in search of a cure, was alternately a prospector and a saloonkeeper. While James was still a small boy, the family moved to Seattle, then a roaring boom town peopled with slinking Chinese, heavily bearded prospectors, diamond-studded gamblers, and the like. Seattle was carrying on a brisk trade with the Orient and was the port of embarkation for the golden treasures of the Klondike. Soon after the Casey family settled there, the father's health took a turn for the worse and James, now eleven and for all practical purposes the head of the family, left school and went to work for a department store, at a salary of two dollars and a half a week. On his first day, he sat on the high front seat of a dray beside an elderly Irishman who instructed him in the mysteries of department-store deliveries. "Well, lad," said the man as the dray clattered along a residential street, "what do you know about street numbers?" "Nothing," replied James.

"It's a fine specimen I have sitting beside me that knows nothing about street numbers," said the delivery man, and then explained that all even-numbered houses were on one side of the street and all odd-numbered houses were on the other. When he told James that there were houses hidden behind other houses, with numbers that ended in fractions, the boy had the vague feeling that the delivery business was full of unsuspected delights. He acquired a working knowledge of Seattle's layout, and in his third week he resigned. He collected the dollar and sixty-seven cents due him and transferred himself and his body of knowledge to the delivery department of a tea store. Casey's father died around this time. James remained at the store, earning five dollars a week by delivering tea from seven-forty-five in the morning until six-thirty in the evening. Saturday nights, he delivered tea until ten-thirty. Regardless of the hour at which he returned from work, his mother had a hot meal ready. Casey's mother still lives in Seattle, where he visits her twice a year. He has had Christmas dinner with her, as far as he can recall, every year of his life. He credits her with the high ethical concepts of the United Parcel Service; he feels that during his

THEATRE GUILD PRODUCTIONS

EUGENE O'NEILL'S
"THE ICEMAN COMETH"
CARL BENTON REID • E. G. MARSHALL
NICHOLAS JOY • FRANK TWEDDELL
Directed by EDDIE DOWLING
Production designed and lighted by
ROBERT EDMOND JONES
Week of May 5—Hanna Theatre, Cleveland
Week of May 12—Cass Theatre, Detroit

INA CLAIRE
in a Gay Comedy by GEORGE KELLY
THE FATAL WEAKNESS
KATHRYN GIVNEY—HOWARD ST. JOHN
Designed and Lighted by DONALD OENSLAGER
Now Playing—Limited Engagement
SELWYN THEATRE, CHICAGO

OKLAHOMA!
Based on Lynn Riggs' "Green Grow the Lilacs"
Music by RICHARD RODGERS
Book & Lyrics by OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, 2nd
Directed by ROUBEN MAMOULIAN
Dances by AGNES de MILLE
Jack Kilty • Mary Hatcher • David Burns • Ruth Weston
St. James Thea., W. 44. Evgs. $4.80, 3.60, 3, 2.40, 1.80, 1.20. Mat. Thurs.—$3, 2.40, 1.80, 1.20. Mat. Sat.—$3.60, 3, 2.40, 1.80, 1.20

THE NATIONAL COMPANY OF
OKLAHOMA!
Week of May 5—Erlanger Thea., Buffalo
Wks. May 12-19—Royal Alexandra, Toronto

THE LONDON COMPANY OF
OKLAHOMA!
LONDON—DRURY LANE THEATRE

JANE
A new comedy by S. N. BEHRMAN based on a short story by Somerset Maugham.
LONDON—ALDWYCH THEATRE

CAROUSEL
Music by RICHARD RODGERS
Book & Lyrics by OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, 2d
Directed by ROUBEN MAMOULIAN
Dances by AGNES de MILLE
with Henry Michel, Iva Withers, Connie Baxter
Eric Mattson, John Conte, Jean Casto
MAJESTIC THEA., W. 44th St., Evgs. 8:30, $4.80, $3.60, $3, $2.40, $1.80, $1.20. Mats. Thurs. and Sat.—$3, $2.40, $1.80, $1.20.

ORDER BY MAIL FROM BOX OFFICES

ALFRED de LIAGRE, Jr. presents
JOHN VAN DRUTEN'S
the Voice of the Turtle
NEW YORK — Morosco Theatre
PHYLLIS RYDER • ALAN BAXTER • VICKI CUMMINGS
PITTSBURGH — Nixon Theatre
HARVEY STEPHENS • LOUISA HORTON • FRANCES TANNEHILL

GEORGE ABBOTT presents
BAREFOOT BOY with CHEEK
Uproarious Musical Comedy
Book by Max SHULMAN • Music by Sidney LIPPMAN • Lyrics by Sylvia DEE
with NANCY WALKER • BILLY REDFIELD
RED BUTTONS • ELLEN HANLEY
MARTIN BECK Thea., 45 St. W. of 8 Ave.
CI. 6-6363. Evgs. 8:30. Mats. WED. & SAT. at 2:30

youth she kept him from succumbing to the wiles of the shady characters of Seattle. "Without her code of ethics," he recently told a friend, "I hate to think what might have happened."

Casey was not entirely satisfied with delivering tea as a life work. For one thing, most of the people who drank tea in Seattle while a gold rush was going on were not the type to fire the imagination of a growing boy. For another, Casey felt that he should resume his education. He gave up his job after two years, entered high school, and after classes and over weekends ran errands for the American District Telegraph Company, which provided a messenger service for Postal Telegraph in Seattle. After a few months, he had to leave school for good and work full time, going on the night shift, from seven at night until seven in the morning. The American District Telegraph Company did not confine its activities to handling telegrams. It had call boxes at strategic points around Seattle, in business offices, hotel lobbies, drugstores, and rooming houses. Messengers, known as footpads, sat on a bench at headquarters waiting for one of the call-box buzzers to buzz. (The dispatcher who handed the footpads their assignments was a Frank Edwards, who some twenty-five years later became mayor of Seattle.) Casey found the work fascinating. "I learned how the night half of the world lived," he says today, rolling his eyes in reminiscent horror. One segment of the night half lived on narcotic stimulation. In response to many of the countless buzzes of the call boxes, Casey would race over to cheap rooming houses and hotels and discover that his summoners were human wrecks who had exhausted their supply of narcotics. If a man was an opium smoker, or hophead, he would tell Casey to "run down and buy a card." Casey would head for the murky waterfront den of one of several Chinamen with whom the hopheads did business. For twenty-five cents, the Chinaman would put a dab of opium on a small white card and fold it into a little cornucopia. For fifty cents, the Chinaman would put into a container made of cowhorn sufficient opium to inspire a man to write a better poem than "Kubla Khan." Casey always felt that the opium smokers were a cut above the cocaine addicts, or snowbirds, an unwholesome and desiccated lot with no tendencies toward poesy. "They were all fiends," he still says, "but the snowbirds were the real fiends." His work didn't bring him in contact solely with fiends. He was often impressed into pumping a church organ during choir practice, tending a baby in a hotel room while the parents went to the theatre, rustling up bail for jailbirds, acting as a callboy to rout railway engineers from their beds in time to make their runs, picking up mail at the general-delivery window of the post office, and delivering packages for stores. He became adept at rushing the growler and at transporting entire meals on trays balanced on a flat-topped cap on his head. Casey spent many evenings hurrying through the streets beneath a tasty table d'hôte of soup, corned beef and cabbage, apple pie, and coffee. Once in a while, he delivered a telegram. He was often paid off in nuggets of gold, and it was not unusual for a generous tipper from the Klondike to sprinkle his hand with gold dust sifted from a chamois bag.

After a year or so with the company, Casey, now fifteen, and the possessor of a capital of thirty dollars, joined forces with two colleagues and opened a rival messenger service. Telephones were beginning to come in, and the partners felt that call boxes had seen their day. They rented an office, had a telephone installed, and waited for it to ring. It rang so rarely that one partner became nervous and dropped out of the firm. Casey and his remaining associate managed to do a good deal of uninterrupted reading. One night, Casey read an article telling how Goldfield, Nevada, had, as its name implied, struck it rich. The partners had their phone disconnected and headed for Goldfield, which they felt was ripe for a reliable messenger service. Goldfield turned out to have everything but Gary Cooper. If men passed cutting remarks on the streets without smiling, they didn't live to tell the tale. The sheriff, a man named Bob Ingalls, who spent much of his time shooting it out with desperadoes and whiskey-crazed Indians, was known for his fearlessness. He wore a gold badge, fricasseed with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, that was reputed to have cost the community eleven hundred dollars. He was a teetotaller, even though he owned the Palace Saloon,

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which was on one corner of the principal street intersection of the town, opposite the Mohawk, which was diagonally across from the Blazers, which, in turn, faced the Hermitage. Down the street was the Northern, owned and operated by Tex Rickard, who had recently emigrated from Seattle, where he had been managing director of the Western. Casey, stepping into this pastoral with nothing more in mind than running a few errands, looked up an old-time Nevada friend of his father, who introduced him and his partner to the sheriff. Ingalls gave the boys a sharp, calculating glance, and then the corners of his mouth curled into a smile. "Glad to have you men in Goldfield," he said. He needed to say no more. Doors began to open for Casey.

Goldfield had six hundred telephones, all connected to one switchboard. Calls kept coming in for people without phones, and the manager of the exchange felt that it had an obligation to deliver the messages. He told Casey that if he and his partner would agree to deliver these messages, he would pay them fifty dollars a month and permit them to operate their own messenger service in a corner of the telephone office. They accepted, and thereby cornered the errand market in Goldfield. Citizens merely had to ask Central for a messenger to bring Casey or his partner to their door on a bicycle. Shortly after Joe Gans and Battling Nelson went forty-two rounds in Goldfield for the lightweight championship of the world in a match promoted by Tex Rickard, Casey's partner rode his bicycle into one of the town's most disreputable characters and was shot to death. Casey returned to Seattle. He was determined to remain in the delivery business, but he felt that the time had come to establish himself in more stable surroundings.

Casey joined up with three partners of around his own age, nineteen, and in August, 1907, they set up as the American Messenger Company, with Casey at the head. Casey didn't know it yet, but the United Parcel Service was in a sense established. They rented office space for twenty-five dollars a month in the cramped basement of a saloon. The saloonkeeper lent the firm a discarded free-lunch counter. On this stood two telephones, one for each of the telephone companies in Seattle. The only other office equipment was a notebook to keep records of incoming calls, a few stools behind the counter, and a wooden bench for the half-dozen hired

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store. The habit is widespread and apparently unbreakable. It assumes virulent form when two women shop together, each trying to impress the other by the wild purchase of more and more merchandise, generally high-priced. Besides losing the sale, stores are charged double by United Parcel, once for the delivery and once for the "call," or pickup. United Parcel claims that pickups result in an all-around loss. There is generally the loss of the driver's time while the lady hunts through the house for the package; more often than not, the package requires rewrapping before it can go in the truck; and the irregularity of the handling disarranges United Parcel operations. The unit cost of all package deliveries is thus raised, and this increase is finally reflected in higher retail prices.

Packages follow a formidably inexorable route from store to customer. Specialty-store packages are picked up by United Parcel drivers near the close of business each day. They are taken, unsorted, to the central station, over on First Avenue. Once in the central station, they enjoy much the same experience as a small boy in the Fun House at Luna Park. They make a series of swift journeys down slides, ramps, chutes, and belts. They are put first on an endless rubber belt a hundred feet long, moving at a rate of thirty feet a minute. Sorters, who know the delivery route for every community within the fifty-mile radius of United Parcel's service, stand on a wooden platform beside the belt. As each package comes by, they take it off and place it on one of several other belts, according to its destination. Eventually, by belt and by truck, they reach one or another of United Parcel's thirty-two substations around town. All packages headed for the East Side of Manhattan, for example, travel quickly to the Manhattan East substation, which is, as it happens, in the basement of the central station. Here sorters mark the route number in crayon on each package, and it is then placed in the proper metal bin on a long platform against which the trucks are backed up. Westchester, Long Island, New Jersey, and Brooklyn packages go down slides to trucks, which take them directly to their substations. Some routes in Manhattan cover an area of only a block or two; sometimes a truck handles packages for no more than a half-dozen huge apartment houses. Regardless of the size of a driver's delivery area, urban or suburban, he knows the location of every house on every street or lane in it, even if the house is behind another house

and has a fractional number. Packages are placed in the trucks in the reverse order of their delivery. The first packages in are the last packages out. Trucks are packed during the night and are all ready for the drivers when they show up for work in the morning. United Parcel has its own employees in the wrapping rooms of the large department stores, and they do a considerable part of the sorting right on the premises, either sending the packages directly to their proper substations or to the endless belt in the central station, where they join the flow of packages from the specialty shops. At these stations, all packages are routed into other trucks and delivered to the householder's door.

Casey spends most of his working day in his office, which is on the fourth floor of the central station, but he is still within earshot of the surflike rumble of the parcels. From time to time, unable to control his interest in their progress, he rises from his desk and invites whoever is with him at the time to accompany him to the platform beside the endless belt. Recently, he stood with a friend, watching thousands and thousands of packages. He was silent for several minutes. Then his face lighted up. He seemed exhilarated, like a lumberjack facing a challenging log jam. "Packages for everybody!" he said suddenly. "Packages for Chinatown—a difficult area. Drivers have trouble remembering who they left the package with—everybody looks alike! Packages for Harlem—hardly any charge accounts in Harlem! Packages for the West Side—democratic neighborhood. Give packages the kind of welcome packages deserve! Packages for Greenwich Village—*very* odd packages!" Casey leaned over the platform and scooped up a couple of parcels from the belt. "Thousands of packages!" he said. "Anybody can deliver a package, but our boys know their business and the spokes of our wheel spell service! No geniuses. We've got a good idea and it's growing." Casey tenderly set the packages back on the belt, with the air of a man who is bidding goodbye to old friends. —PHILIP HAMBURGER

•

MISS LILI FINLETTER,
CASS CANFIELD JR.
TO BE WED JUNE 26
—*The Herald Tribune, April 30th issue, page 33, col. 1.*

PAMELA PARDEE,
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—*The Herald Tribune, same issue, same page, col. 4.*

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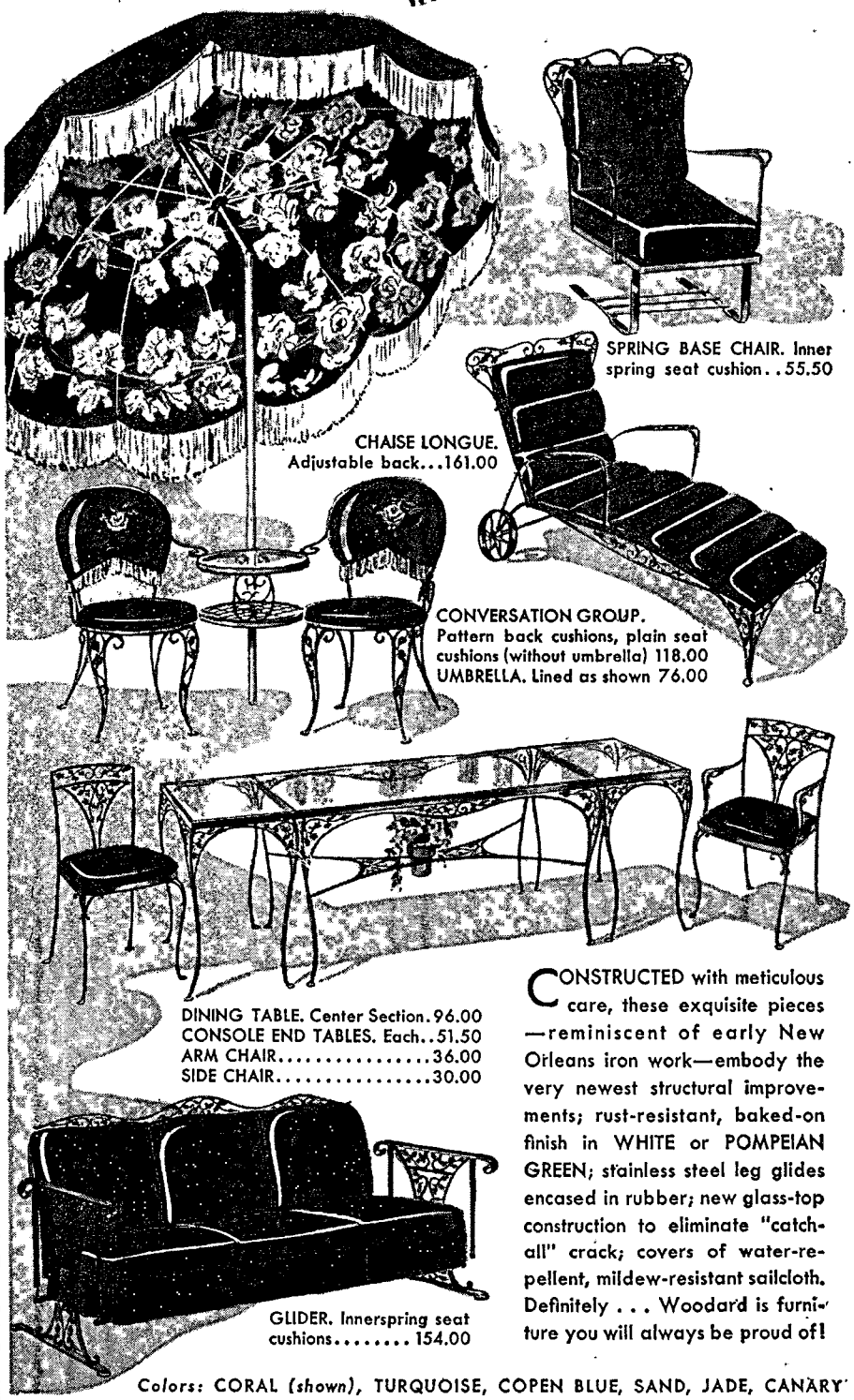

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hands. They faced the free-lunch counter, behind which Casey and his partners conducted the business whenever they weren't running errands themselves. Casey wore a green eyeshade and spoke in short, brisk sentences. The firm started out with four bicycles, but before long it switched to motorcycles. None of the messengers were Paavo Nurmis, but they loved their work. The group included a Hawaiian Chinese known as Jimmy the Chinaman, who evolved a complicated and unreliable abacus-type method of determining how long it would take to deliver a given package; a Klondike veteran called Frozen Feet; and the Paper Grinder, an elderly errand boy with a tendency to get himself mangled in the wheels of the company's motorcycles. Gradually, as the firm's placards announcing "Best Service—Lowest Rates" made their appearance in more and more places around Seattle, Casey and his partners enlarged their staff. Ideas that have since burst into full bloom in the United Parcel Service began to take shape. The American Messenger Company started to take in good, clean, healthy boys from nice families. They were furnished with uniform caps and instructed, when answering the phone, never to say "We'll be over right away" if no messengers were on hand. "Thank you, Madam, the American Messenger Company will be at your disposal in half an hour" was the prescribed answer. Of Casey's three partners, one lost interest in bundles and drifted away while still a young man, another died in 1933, and the third, Casey's brother George, is today in charge of all of United Parcel's Pacific Coast operations.

The office was open day and night, and its reputation for reliable service grew. Zone rates were established, running from fifteen cents for a short trip to sixty-five cents for a long haul. Steady customers, stores among them, were granted discounts for volume trade. In 1913, Casey and his partners changed the name of their outfit to the Merchants' Parcel Delivery and added a Ford (it was among the first two hundred thousand cars turned out by Henry Ford) to their small fleet of motorcycles. Casey soon realized that consolidated deliveries—the simultaneous delivering of packages from several stores—would bring the cost per package way down. He began to experiment with a delivery system rather like the one used by the Post Office. He divided Seattle into sections and assigned vehicles to each one. Aware that others were al-

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ready in the consolidated-delivery business, he wrote to the chambers of commerce of every city in the country with a population of a hundred thousand or more, asking for the names of local delivery firms. He received the names of more than a hundred, to each of which he sent a questionnaire. The answers would have driven the average package man into some other line of work. Most companies, it seemed, were barely making ends meet. Casey, studying his replies, decided that his methods were superior and the opportunities great. "Nothing to fear," he told a colleague. "The field's wide open. Down the Coast we go, then eastward toward New York." By 1918, three large department stores in Seattle had placed their delivery business in the company's hands. In 1919, the company invaded Oakland, California, changed its name —for the last time—to United Parcel Service, and took over the deliveries for several large stores in that city. In 1930, Casey was ready to tackle New York. By that time, he was delivering all the department-store packages in Oakland, San Diego, Long Beach, and Pasadena, ninety-five per cent of the packages in Seattle, and ninety per cent of the packages in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Portland.

THE New York department stores prided themselves on the efficiency and elegance of their delivery systems, and Casey, when he went to work on them, had to break down a number of prejudices against consolidated deliveries. The stores considered the advertising their own trucks gave them valuable. In the days when most people were still living in houses, everybody on the block knew that Mrs. Jones had bought something at Tiffany's when the Tiffany wagon parked in front of her door. Casey argued that large apartment houses had invalidated this form of advertising. Furthermore, the city was becoming so crowded that people all over town were getting knocked down, or at least grazed, by department-store delivery trucks. Casey said that he was perfectly willing to let his trucks take the blame; the populace, he pointed out, would thereafter shake their fists and cry "Damn United Parcel!" instead of "Damn Stern's!" Even more important, Casey said he could deliver packages for less than what it was then costing the stores, which amounted to between two and two-and-one-half per cent of their total sales.

Casey's first clients in the metropolitan area were Lord & Taylor and

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McCreery in Manhattan and Hahne's in Newark. All three stores were members of a retail group known as the Associated Dry Goods Corporation, which had a delivery system of its own. Casey took over the entire rolling stock and delivery personnel, a practice he continued to follow as he became the delivery man for other big New York stores. He sold the trucks he didn't need. Consolidation even eased the city's traffic congestion a little. By 1931, Casey was delivering for thirty-seven stores in New York with a hundred and fifty-nine trucks. Lord & Taylor and McCreery, between them, had used the same number. In 1907, in Seattle, Casey was delivering within a ten-mile radius. In 1930, he was delivering in New York within a fifty-mile radius. Today, in the seventeen cities serviced by United Parcel, it has thirty-five hundred trucks and six thousand employees, who travel more than twenty-five million miles a year. They carry every department-store and major-specialty-shop package in New York, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, San Diego, Pasadena, Long Beach, Paterson, and Newark, and deliver for the majority of the stores in Seattle, Portland, Detroit, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia. Gross annual receipts from the delivery of all the packages in all the cities served by United Parcel have been estimated at twenty-five million dollars. "We have come a long way," Casey recently told a friend, "from the days when I picked up a package, looked at the address, and ran right over."

Today, Casey is president of the United Parcel Service of America, a holding company which owns all the stock in the separate United Parcel organizations—one for each metropolitan area served. The stock in the holding company is owned by employees (most of them high-ranking) and ex-employees or their heirs. Casey and his brother George are the largest stockholders, but even between them they do not have a majority holding. Being a big stockholder, Casey has always made a point of not taking a large salary.

IN New York, the United Parcel Service has, along with its seventeen hundred trucks, a delivery personnel—drivers, helpers, and sorters—of almost three thousand. During the Christmas season, three thousand more are added to the staff. Casey's trucks deliver once a day in the fifty-mile radius, including Saltaire and Steamboat Landing, Long Island; Cheesequake, New

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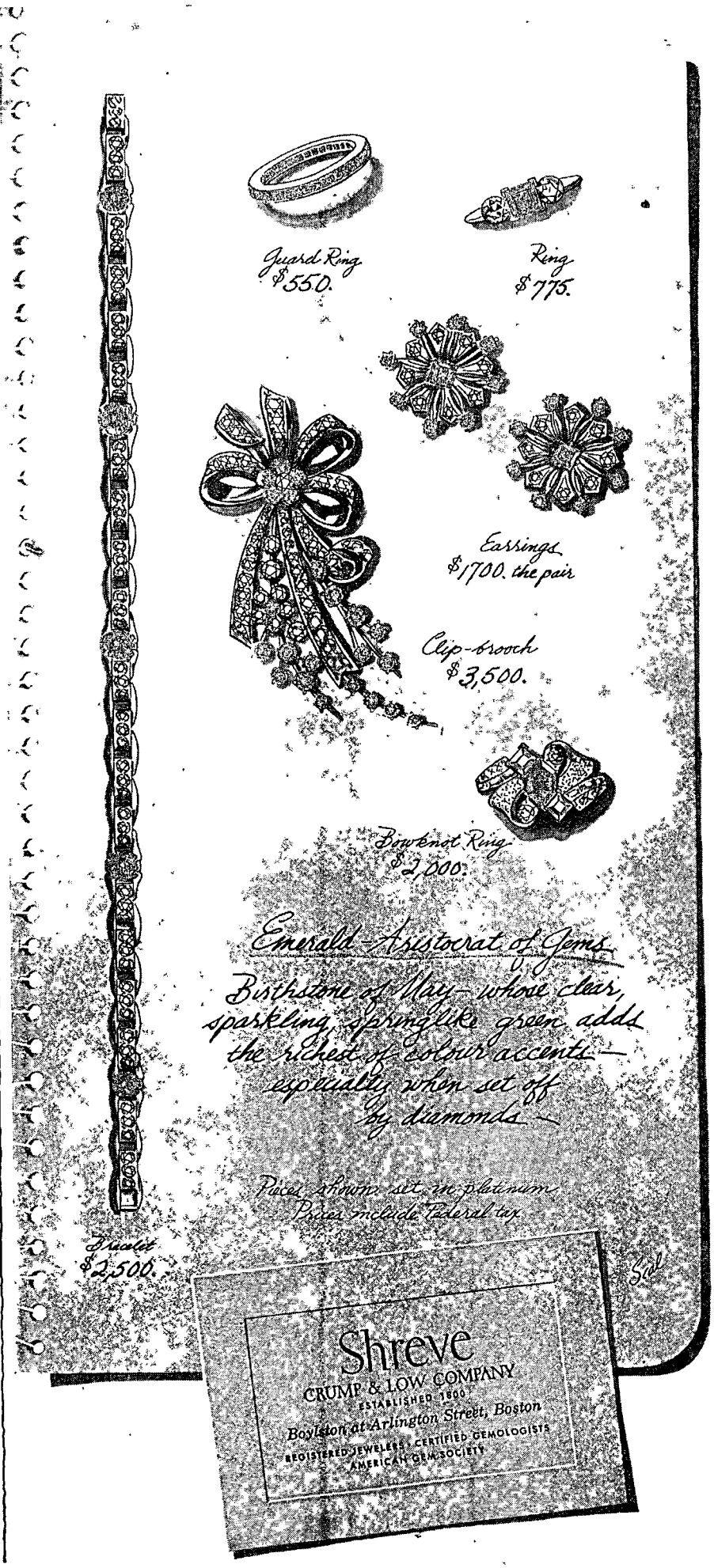
Jersey; Bungalow Town, Staten Island; and Bedloe, Ellis, and Welfare Islands. If people aren't home, the men make two more tries before returning the package to the store. Department stores must sign for a minimum of five years, but some have contracted for ten. Specialty stores sign for a minimum of one year and generally pay a flat rate for every package. Department stores pay on what is known as an "adjusted-rate basis." The size of a package is one factor in determining the cost of its delivery. Packages of less than two cubic feet in capacity or five feet in length, or weighing less than twenty-five pounds, are listed as one-unit, or one-count, packages. Larger and/or heavier packages have higher counts. A hat would be marked as one unit, whereas a garbage pail or a hamper would be classified as two-count. The delivery of two-count packages costs twice as much as that of one-count packages. All stores are billed weekly by United Parcel at the going rate, but at the end of every three months, those on an adjusted-rate basis may get either a refund or a boost in the billing, depending upon whether United Parcel finds that its unit cost for delivering packages in the city in question has gone up or down during the period. Rates vary widely in different cities. Cities with large sections of private homes have lower rates, since it is cheaper to deliver from house to house than in an area such as the Bronx, where hours of a driver's time are consumed on the stairways of hundreds of walk-up apartment houses. C.O.D. packages cost, in general, one-third more than other packages of the same unit count. Casey is reluctant to disclose anything about his financial relations with his customers, but some of those in New York say that it costs around thirty cents these days to deliver a bundle via United Parcel. The fine points of United Parcel's services have made many stores more conscious of delivery costs than they were when they ran their own parcel services, often on a less scientific basis. Not long ago, stores found that five-foot-two-inch ironing boards, for instance, ate up the profit in delivery costs, whereas a five-foot ironing board, having a lower unit count, will not only make the customer just as happy but will also make the store some money. Both United Parcel and the stores it serves yield to no one in their unbridled love for the woman shopper, but they could wring her neck when she purchases eight or nine items with every intention of returning all but one to the



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an lady, discovering on the
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n pale and murmur, "Must I
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of a tantrum which Sinclair

Friends Talking
in the Night
by Philip
Hamburger
Alfred A. Knopf
New York
1999

DECEMBER, 1940

Tunneller

What we want to be when we grow up is a tunneller in Macy's. To explain what a tunneller does, we first have to describe Macy's conveyor system, by which packages are sent from the wrapping rooms on each floor to the loading platform in the basement, where they are put into the delivery trucks. The conveyors are spiral metal chutes, about three feet high and two and a half wide. They go round and round and down; or, in other words, they're like spiral staircases, only they're chutes. That clear? There are twenty-four of them, in groups of three, throughout the store. Many times a day, but especially around Christmas, the basement-bound parcels get jammed in the chutes. Macy's employs six men as tunnellers, to dive into the chutes, slide down to the place where the jam has occurred, and start the packages moving. The senior tunneller, a stocky Irishman named Mike Reynolds, has been at it for twenty years.

Expounding the technique of his peculiar job, Reynolds told us first that the only equipment he carries is a flashlight. He wears overalls and waxes the seat of them. The architects who installed the chutes expected that trouble-shooters would be lowered into them by ropes, but this didn't work out; the winding of the chutes created too much friction. It was Reynolds who developed the proper technique. He climbs in, feet first, braces one shoulder against one side of the tunnel and his feet against the other, and, *zip,* he's out of sight. By pressing harder with his feet, he can slow down, or come to a complete halt. Reynolds used to

work in his bare feet, but switched to rubber-soled shoes several years ago, after sliding into a rather messy can of spilled Maltose.

The surface of the chutes is waxed, and most of the pileups result from packages coming to a dead stop on surfaces where the wax has worn thin. During the Christmas rush, the trouble is usually caused by parcels carelessly tossed in by temporary helpers. These weeks, Reynolds makes about two hundred descents a day. He has the job of breaking in new tunnellers, who are invariably terrified. Reynolds gets in first, and the two of them slide down together, Reynolds showing the fledgling how to handle himself, and remarking occasionally, "See? Nothing to be afraid of." Most of the chutes have an opening on every floor, but several drop five flights without a break, and one levels out at a point over the executive offices. There is no interruption of normal activity when Reynolds goes into a chute; the packages continue to slide down along with him. He allows small packages to pass him, and supports big ones with his shoulder until he can clear the way. Then he climbs out at the next exit. Once he was severely conked by a chair rushing down behind him, but he can remember no other disasters. The other day, one of Reynolds' colleagues was tussling with a large, unruly package, trying to get it unstuck, when another piece of merchandise, equally immense, swept down and pinned him against the first package. No word having been heard from this man for an alarming interval, Reynolds went to the rescue, travelling along on a tide of Christmas gifts. "I was up to me ears," he told us. The man was rescued O.K., you'll be glad to learn.

Reynolds' big moment comes at the end of the banquet which some of the employees hold once a year, just after Christmas, in the restaurant on the eighth floor. When it's time to go home, Reynolds bids his friends good night and dives into a chute. It's always an effective exit.

Emerg

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CHAPTER 6

The IWW in Action, 1906–1908

FROM 1906 to 1908 the IWW, though often interred by its enemies, never took to the grave. Despite manifold weaknesses, it waged industrial conflicts in cities as far removed as Skowhegan, Maine, and Portland, Oregon; Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Goldfield, Nevada. It organized workers in textiles, lumber, mining, and other trades. It survived lost strikes, withstood the economic panic and ensuing recession of 1907–1908, and endured a second internal split. By the end of 1908 the IWW had assumed what thereafter remained its basic characteristics and purposes.

During these formative years the IWW also created enduring myths about itself and committed mistakes which it never overcame. The organization, like a failed psychoanalytic patient, never liberated itself totally from the traumatic experiences of infancy.

One of the most enduring IWW myths is of an alleged "Golden Age," associated with organizational success in the isolated Nevada mining camp of Goldfield, where, within four years of its founding in 1902, the IWW had organized all the workers in the community except for a handful of AFL building tradesmen. Newsboys, waiters, bartenders, cooks, clerks, maids, hard-rock miners, reporters—John Dos Passos' Mac in *The 42nd Parallel* first gives his loyalty to the IWW in Goldfield—all carried the red IWW card. No more complete amalgamation of workers had ever existed in the American labor movement;

never before was an injury to one so obviously the concern of all. In the IWW's first official history, Vincent St. John writes of Goldfield:

> The highest point of efficiency for any labor organization was reached by the I.W.W. and the W.F. of M. in Goldfield, Nevada. No committees were ever sent to any employers. The union adopted wage scales and regulated hours. The secretary posted the same on a bulletin board outside of the union hall, and it was the LAW. The employers were forced to come and see the union committees.[1]

Goldfield could better be called the IWW's "Gilded Age." Never achieving anything approaching complete success, the IWW left Goldfield in total defeat.

With only minor variations, the Goldfield story repeated the theme of class warfare earlier played out in similar Idaho and Colorado mining towns. Miners early joined the WFM, which quickly established the upper hand in employer-employee relationships. For a time, unionism flourished as workers maintained an unusual degree of economic and job security.

After the founding of the IWW in 1905 and the affiliation of the WFM as its Mining Department, the Wobblies invaded the camp. Goldfield's WFM Local 220 already included some of that union's most radical members, many of them refugees from the bitter 1903–1904 Cripple Creek and Telluride conflicts. The creation of the IWW enabled these "radicals" to extend their organizational hold over the community. The IWW captured a local town workers' federal union formerly affiliated with the AFL. Renamed Local 77, IWW, it claimed to represent all Goldfield's town workers, and also those in the neighboring mining community of Tonopah. It was in those two towns that IWW Local 77 won from employers the union-enforced "LAW" about which St. John later boasted.[2]

Events in Goldfield stimulated local Wobblies to further successes. On September 10, 1906, at a time when the national leaderships of the IWW and the WFM were drawing apart, both organizations' Goldfield affiliates amalgamated—the town workers and the miners merging into an enlarged WFM-IWW Local 220. Even after the WFM seceded from the IWW in January 1907, Goldfield's workers remained united in a Wobbly-dominated coalition. The allies functioned aggressively. On December 20, 1906, they struck local mines to obtain higher wages and shorter hours, and within three weeks the miners gained their major objectives as well as added fringe benefits.

By March 1907 the amalgamated union claimed three thousand dues-paying members, and it felt secure enough to order all local businesses to go on the eight-hour day—a request promptly accepted. Not satisfied with domination of the mines and local businesses, Local 220 waged war with an AFL carpenters' local, demanding that all carpenters take out red cards or be denied employment in and around the mines. This attack against the AFL carpenters marked the farthest penetration of the IWW-WFM coalition in Goldfield.[3]

Shortly thereafter, a unique concatenation of circumstances drove a wedge between the town workers and the miners, thereby destroying unionism in Goldfield. In the spring of 1907, with Haywood coming to trial, Goldfield opponents of the WFM and IWW asserted that they now had evidence to prove that they were combating not a labor union but a criminal conspiracy. Simultaneously, internecine conflict immobilized the WFM as a result of its secession from the IWW. The battle between Western miners and Wobblies exacerbated an already wretched union situation in Nevada. Moreover, the AFL chose this moment to attack the WFM-IWW axis in Goldfield, and Gompers dispatched a special organizer to the area to join with mine owners and conservative WFM members in fighting the IWW and reasserting AFL hegemony. Soon economic panic and recession would make this bad union scene even worse.[4]

The counterattack by mine owners and local businessmen, well aware that Local 220's conservatives and radicals were bitterly fighting among themselves, came in March 1907. Forming a Businessmen's and Mine Owners' Association, they refused to employ IWW members. On March 15, supported by the AFL, they closed all local places of business, then reopened them three days later without IWW employees. Throughout March and most of April, local mines remained closed as owners and WFM moderates sought to purge Wobblies from the miners' union.[5]

At this stage Goldfield's class lines had become hopelessly confused. Only one thing was certain: Goldfield was no longer an IWW utopia. On one side, local businessmen and mine owners stood with AFL members and conservative miners; on the other, radical town workers and miners sympathetic to the IWW held fast to their position. Both sides went armed, and a precarious peace prevailed as local officials, immobilized by their own divided loyalties, kept hands off.

A majority of the miners and employers, rather than risk open war-

fare in such a confused situation, came to terms on April 22, 1907. The miners' union protected its prevailing rate of wages and won jurisdiction over all employees working in and around the mines. Employers in return gained a promise that town labor disputes would not be allowed to interfere with mine operations. The agreement, intended to last for two years, brought labor peace through the summer and early fall of 1907.[6]

With the IWW apparently beaten, the mine owners became more aggressive. Goldfield businessmen professed to have fought the Industrial Workers of the World partly because Wobblies were "subversive radicals" and partly because they were alleged criminal conspirators. There seemed, in fact, some basis for such fears. Federal investigators, while criticizing the actions of the mine owners and also the governor of Nevada, reported to the President that "by permitting their organization [Local 220] to be managed and controlled by men of violent tendencies, the union as a body has . . . laid itself open to the reproach of being a vicious organization, and has furnished a foundation for the fear existing in Goldfield . . ."[7] But in fact it was organized labor *per se*, not criminal conspirators, the employers were seeking to combat. They cooperated with the AFL only because that group had never organized local miners or town workers, and therefore posed no threat to employers' economic power. The IWW, by organizing workers successfully, had effectively restricted management's prerogatives. Hence mine owners attacked the IWW and the WFM to reduce labor's economic power, not solely to curb murderers and criminals. In short, employers opposed the IWW in Goldfield in 1907 (as they would in many other cities at other times) not only because it was radical, or violent, or un-American, but because it organized workers, levied economic demands upon employers, and successfully curtailed management's power.

Goldfield's mine owners publicly revealed their anti-union attitude in November 1907, when they broke their April agreement with the miners' union. Using the panic of that year and the subsequent monetary stringency as a pretext, the owners announced they would stop cash payments to their workers. Rejecting union compromise offers, they declared total war against organized labor.

At this juncture, Nevada's public authorities were in no position to aid Goldfield's employers: the state lacked either militia or police for the job. Goldfield's businessmen also realized that town and county officials could not be relied upon to combat labor. Thus,

employers devised a scheme with Governor John Sparks to bring in federal troops.[8] In a secret meeting on December 2, 1907, the mine owners and the Governor agreed that Sparks, upon receipt of a coded wire, would request federal troops. No Goldfield town or county officials were informed of these arrangements. Immediately upon their return to Goldfield, mine owners dispatched the prearranged code message to Sparks, who on December 3 asked President Roosevelt for troops. After a brief legal contretemps between the Governor and the President, Roosevelt ordered the soldiers to Goldfield two days later.[9] On December 6 federal troops arrived in what to all appearances was an orderly, peaceful community. Only two weeks later, on December 20, agents sent by Roosevelt to investigate the situation wired the President: "Our investigation so far completely has failed to sustain the general and sweeping allegations by the governor in calling for troops. . . . We do find no evidence that any condition then existed not easily controlled by the local authorities." Goldfield, the agents went on, "had been for at least six months previously as free from disturbances as any mining town of similar situation and conditions. There had been no organized opposition to law."[10] But the federal agents soon discovered why mine owners and the Governor wanted federal troops. The mine owners, they learned, had determined to reduce wages and also to refuse to employ WFM members—steps they feared to take without military protection. The federal troops, Roosevelt's investigators concluded, "were part of a general plan of the mine owners to establish their independence of the union . . ."[11]

Aware of all this, Roosevelt nevertheless maintained the federal presence in Goldfield. The troops had been dispatched when there was no need for them, but the mine owners soon created that need, for the President's investigators went on to report that a wage reduction and new "yellow-dog" contracts, posted December 12, would cause the miners' union to resort to violence if the troops were withdrawn. Roosevelt, convinced that Haywood and the WFM "Inner Circle" were murderers, thought the worst of Goldfield's miners. Federal troops thus remained on duty to preserve Goldfield's peace until March 1908, when state police, recently provided for by a special session of the Nevada legislature, replaced them.[12]

The miners' union was by now a shambles. On April 3, when it finally voted to end its strike, only 115 men cast ballots, the remainder having left the union or the area. What had befallen the WFM and the IWW in Goldfield was summed up in 1911 by one of the mine

owners who had helped destroy the union in 1907–1908. "The Western Federation of Miners and the I.W.W. are now eliminated from the camp of Goldfield," he wrote, "and always will be as long as I am identified with it."[13]

So ended the IWW's "Golden Age"—and with it the dreams of quick and easy organization of American workers into One Big Union powerful enough to dictate to employers. The Wobblies now knew what to expect in the future. Both the AFL and the WFM would fight them, and its members would scab on them; employers would take advantage of labor's internal divisions; and public authorities would be hostile and repressive. Most important, it became obvious that the more successful the IWW was in achieving its economic goals, the more it would meet employer and public opposition. Radicalism and revolutionary rhetoric were tolerable as long as they were not translated into actual economic power.

The defeat in Nevada notwithstanding, Wobblies liked to look back upon the Goldfield experience as a time when they had demonstrated, temporarily at least, that the One Big Union idea really worked, that laborers from many different occupations *could* be united into one organization, that an injury to one *could* be made the concern of all. A romanticized version of Goldfield became the ideal to be realized. This ideal kept the IWW alive from 1906 to 1908, as it tried to organize workers hitherto thought unorganizable.

The Goldfield debacle convinced some Wobblies that the organization should concentrate upon recruiting members in the urban-industrial East. Ben H. Williams, a member of the general executive board, maintained that Eastern workers, though less imbued than their Western brothers with the spirit of revolutionary industrial unionism, were also less mobile and hence superior material for stable organization.[14]

Williams' observation did not pass unheeded. In 1907–1908, articles in the *Industrial Union Bulletin* described IWW-led industrial conflicts in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in Skowhegan, Maine, and in Schenectady, New York. The Bridgeport and Schenectady strikes are particularly important for what they reveal about IWW methods and

Curious Work
A New Yorker at
Large by Philip Hamburger

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S.F., CA
1987

Introduction: A Personal Note

While putting together this selection of almost fifty years of work I have allowed my mind to wander, somewhat freely, over many of the experiences and personalities encountered during this particular, and exhilarating, personal journey. Since all of the stories in this book first appeared in the *New Yorker*, most of my memories deal with life at that singular and exceptionally humane publication. I have had the privilege of being permitted to write as I pleased—minus diktat or interference, and always with patient support—by two of the most remarkable editors of my time: Harold W. Ross and William Shawn. Indefinable and magical qualities somehow got hold of both of these men, and they in turn transmitted glimpses of their strange alchemy to those fortunate enough to work for them. Their message to the writer (at least, to *this* writer) was both immensely simple and immensely complex: Be yourself. Be unafraid. Stretch your imagination. Above all, seek the truth, as you see the truth. Don't fret about the possibility of offending someone if what you write is what you know to be correct. We are presenting you with that most precious elixir—freedom. The rest is up to you.

I went to work for the *New Yorker* in February 1939, the fifteenth year of the magazine's existence. I was twenty-five years old. Through the good offices of Henry F. Pringle, who had been a teacher of mine at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University; who had written many of the early *New Yorker* Profiles, and whose biography of Theodore Roosevelt

had won the Pulitzer Prize, I was given a letter of introduction to St. Clair McKelway, then the *New Yorker*'s managing editor. McKelway was not only a superb editor, but was one of the truly beautiful prose writers of his day, and it is typical of the fickle spotlight that catches literary celebrities in its glare that he has never been properly recognized for the master literary craftsman that he was.

McKelway read Pringle's letter and asked me to come to his office at 25 West Forty-third Street. McKelway was tall, suave, strikingly handsome, and given to tugging at a rather distinguished blond mustache. "Try your hand at some of these 'Talk of the Town' assignments," he said, almost apologetically. "Try to make the stories funny. And you might remember that one can be serious without being solemn." It was quite evident that he was not given to small talk. The interview was over. I had been too excited to notice much about the office. I was too anxious to get on with the assignments he had handed me. I do not recall exactly what they were about, but for the next week I went to Queens, to Staten Island, into the turbulent tide (on a boat) of the East River, wrote my stories, and took them back to McKelway. McKelway read the stories while I sat at his desk. I was calmer now, and some impressions of the office became etched in my memory. There was nothing remotely grand about his office, or for that matter about any of the other spaces that constituted the *New Yorker*. The premises—they are still occupied by the magazine—were so undistinguished and unglamorous that they reached a plateau of genuine elegance and honesty unmatched anywhere else in my experience. The bare white walls, the somewhat battered wooden desk, the swivel chair with tattered green leather backing, the stacks of proofs piled high on McKelway's desk, gave me a feeling of the deepest comfort. I recall being especially impressed by an ordinary Big Ben alarm clock that ticked loudly, and by a marmalade jar crammed with extraordinarily sharp, thick brown pencils. McKelway finished reading what I had given to him, tugged at that mustache, and mumbled something that I took to be neither encouragement nor its opposite, and I left.

For the next few days, I sat at home pondering what appeared to be a dark future. The phone rang. It was McKelway.

"Where are you?" he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I hired you last week. You haven't showed up."

"When do you want me?"

"Now," he said, and hung up.

I reached the office in World Class time, and was directed to a cubicle roughly the size of a hotel icebox, containing three desks. "That's yours," said McKelway, pointing to the desk in the middle. On the desk was a typewriter, a telephone, a tall pile of yellow copy paper, and an ordinary water glass, filled with the brand of sharp pencils I had seen in McKelway's office. "We're a bit crowded here," said McKelway. "Your companions in this room are Brendan Gill and David Lardner. They would seem to be out at the moment. I'll be in touch."

I was a happy man. I sat a while and just stared across the next desk and out the window. The view was north, toward the imposing monolithic slab of the RCA Building in Rockefeller Center, over a group of relatively low structures. (Incidentally, my office today, forty-eight years later, although one floor above the original, looks out upon the same striking cityscape; those low buildings are among the few not destroyed by real estate's inexorable midtown march.) My reverie was interrupted by a knock on the door. A man with the most direct and honest features I have ever seen entered volcanically. The terrain of his face was rugged. There were gaps between his teeth. Humor played all over his face. His dark hair stood straight up, porcupine-style. His wrists did not seem permanently attached either to his hands or his arms. They revolved in private orbits. "Hamburger," he said, in a deep, resounding voice that I continue to hear down through the years, "I'm Ross. Welcome, and God bless." And he was gone.

It dawned on me that I had become a member of the staff. There had been no mention of salary, and no forms had been filled out. Some sort of celebration seemed in order. I telephoned a young woman of my acquaintance, met her in front of the New York Public Library (one block from the office), took her to a Times Square restaurant, where we demolished a seven-course dinner for one dollar twenty-five cents each, walked over to the nearby St. James Theatre, purchased two seats in the second balcony for one dollar ten cents each, and saw Maurice Evans as Falstaff in *Henry IV, part 1*. The day had been a perfect one. Thinking back now, I find myself drawn to the words of the poet Czeslaw Milosz: "How could I have ex-

pected that after a long life I would understand no more than to wake up at night and to repeat: strange, strange, strange. . . . O how funny and strange."

Work began in earnest the next morning. The *New Yorker* does not officially open until ten o'clock (a civilized hour), but Brendan Gill, a slim man with jet black hair, was already at his desk by the window when I arrived. He was extremely pleasant. "I'm glad I got here first," he said, "as it was necessary to climb over your desk in order to reach mine." Brendan is an early riser and to this day (although now occupying an office entirely to himself) is reputed to arrive at the crack of dawn. Our friendship has been a close one for many years, and for reasons obscured by the mists of time we invariably address one another as Uncle Brendan and Uncle Phil. McKelway had left some assignments on my desk, and I was out of the office until later in the day. When I returned a young man was occupying the first desk, and I had to scramble unceremoniously across his desk to gain mine. He was amused by the procedure. "Welcome to our cozy little nest," he said. It was David Lardner, the youngest son of Ring Lardner. My all-fours entrance was the beginning of another close friendship. We spent a great deal of after-hours time together in the semi-official watering holes of the *New Yorker*, Bleeck's Artist & Writers Restaurant (Formerly Club), on West Fortieth Street, and at Tim Costello's celebrated saloon on Third Avenue. David and I were constant moviegoers, with special attention to the films of the Marx Brothers and W. C. Fields. David loved to laugh. He always sat in the first or second row (his eyes were wretched) and laughed and laughed. He went overseas for the *New Yorker* as a war correspondent, and this brilliant man was silenced forever by an exploding mine at Aachen on October 18, 1944.

Time spent with Harold W. Ross: He has often been presented to the public in what I consider misleading terms, as a diamond in the rough, basically uneducated, and given to wondering whether Moby Dick was the man or the whale. This is a form of blasphemy. How can one define genius? (It is true that he had little formal education, and had never been near a college. Neither had Wolcott Gibbs nor McKelway. Lardner had found Yale wanting, and walked away. Joseph Mitchell had attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, but had failed mathematics. A. J. Liebling had flunked out of Dartmouth by failing to rise in time for

morning chapel. Shawn had attended the University of Michigan at a tender age, but dropped out. Thurber came from Ohio State, John McNulty from the back of a candy store in Massachusetts, E. B. White from Cornell, Bainbridge from Northwestern. I had graduated from Johns Hopkins, almost, as I look back, by accident. Gill *had* graduated from Yale, and Kahn from Harvard. And so it went.) But back to Ross. He had a custom in those days of calling in, one by one, the young persons who had turned in "Talk" stories for that week, and going over them line by line and point by point. This provided an unmatched and unparalleled education. I still find it hard to believe that a fledgling writer could have so direct, clear, understanding, and rewarding a relationship with the editor in chief. His questions were deeply penetrating. "Facts," he would say, "give me the facts." Detail fascinated him. The human comedy fascinated him. From time to time, looking up from the copy on his desk, he would say, "Never go cosmic on me, Hamburger," or "Circulation is rising too fast—a very dangerous business," or "Don't expect literary fame—it's like lightning, either it'll strike or it won't." Hardly a word left his lips that was not hugely colloquial, wise and funny. I have no idea where the notion of Ross as an ill-mannered ogre arose. He had a deep concern for other people. "I saw your wife on the street today, Hamburger," he said to me one early evening in his office. "For Christ sake, she's pregnant. You have one child already, where in hell you going to put the next one? *Writers!* I called your landlord, and I think he'll give you a larger apartment." The next day, my landlord, Vincent Astor, telephoned me. "My friend Ross tells me you need larger quarters," said Captain Astor. "I'm going to knock down a wall to the next apartment for you." Some ogre!

The *New Yorker* family in those days was relatively small. The great E. B. White was in a corner office, turning out incomparable "Notes and Comment" pieces for the "Talk of the Town." A handful of us wrote the "Talk" pieces that followed "Comment" in the book. Bainbridge, Kahn, Charles Cooke, Eugene Kinkead, Lardner, and myself, among others. Russell Maloney would rewrite the "Talk" notes of new reporters. Within a week or two, McKelway told me that my notes were of sufficient quality that no rewriting was necessary, and that I was on my own. "By the way," he said, "your salary will be twenty-five dollars a week."

I kept hearing stories about a remarkably intelligent, shy, remote man

named William Shawn, who had an office somewhere down the hall near Ross. Between them, he and Ross were reputed to turn out dozens of ideas for the magazine each day. I caught my first glimpse of him one bright, warm day, waiting for an elevator on the nineteenth floor. He was carrying a bulging briefcase and a furled umbrella, and he was tightly bundled in a dark greatcoat with wraparound scarf. He politely tipped his hat to me as he stepped into the elevator. I did have time, though, sailing down that corridor, to be struck by the delicacy of his features, the kindness of his face, and the all-encompassing look with which he took me in. Soon thereafter, McKelway went off to South America to write some pieces and was replaced as managing editor by Shawn. Now I worked directly with him as well as Ross. Once again, I was blessed. Here was a man of seemingly boundless intellectual capacity, warm, considerate, and, above all, open to almost any idea. His mind worked with such swiftness that I often said no more than one or two words about a projected idea for a piece before he would nod vigorously, and say, "Fine. Of course. Go ahead." And then he would leave me alone—often for achingly long periods—while I wrote the piece. He made it clear that he had complete confidence in me. How could I ever do less than my best for such a person? Although Shawn and Ross were almost completely different physically, they shared the same clear views. They had the deepest respect for writing and writers. They were passionately devoted to the truth. They fervently believed that the editorial functions of a magazine must be kept strictly separate from the business end of things, and that the editorial department must have the final word if excellence and survival are the desired goals.

So many friends, so many years. Lunch was regularly held at a number of restaurants (all gone now) in the neighborhood of the office. Liebling, Mitchell, S. J. Perelman and I ate together a great deal, and the friendships deepened, as did those with Geoffrey Hellman, John Bainbridge, William Maxwell and Milton Greenstein. I recall weekends with Perelman on his farm in Erwinna, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Laura, when Sid would bring out the Ouija board (Sid believed in the Ouija board) and try to reach Harold Ross, who had died in late 1951. "I want to ask Ross about the future of humor," he would say. He sounded dismal as he said it. Through great good fortune, I came to know Janet Flanner when she returned to New York at the start of the war, and the closeness continued until her death. No one could have been more supportive of a younger person's work than Flanner, and I found myself, in the early days, like a homing pigeon, turning up in her office when I came back from a story, and acting out for her *everything* that had taken place during an interview. "Keep going!" she would say. "Tell me more!"

I return for a moment to Shawn, who had become editor in early 1952. He is difficult to write about, since he is such a private person, but scenes come to mind and will not dislodge. Shawn late one night, in his office, going over proofs with me of an Argentine piece, and insisting that a hyphen was grammatically required in a certain word at the end of the article. I argued forcibly that the hyphen—the mere presence of the hyphen—would destroy the sentence. "That's a ruinous hyphen," I said. I wanted two separate words, and no hyphen. I was quite worked up over the hyphen. Shawn was calm and cool. "Perhaps you had better sit outside my office and think it over," he said. From time to time he would pop his head out. "Have you changed your mind?" he asked. This continued from about ten at night until close to two-thirty the next morning. Shawn finally said, sadly, "All right. No hyphen. But you are wrong." And I will never forget the many evenings when, after supper with his family and a few friends, he would sit down at his Steinway and play memorable jazz for us, invariably ending the evening with a rousing "When the Saints Go Marching In." A strange crimson flush would then rise into his face. He would leave the piano and sink into a chair at a far corner of the room and give the impression that he wished that he had played better.

I have travelled widely, at home and abroad, but headquarters have been a red brick building that lies between Forty-third and Forty-fourth Streets, and between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, on the island of Manhattan. I have moved all over the *New Yorker*—writing "Talk of the Town" pieces, "Reporter at Large" articles, "Profiles," all fifty-five "Notes for a Gazetteer," "Onward and Upward with the Arts," "Our Far-Flung Correspondents," "Notes and Comment," "Casuals," parodies, Letters from Foreign Places, the first television columns, even movie and music criticism. The place has been truly a home, both mentally and spiritually, but a home without boundaries. For this book, I have selected stories that interested

me most as I read them over. They represent no point of view but my own. They are not confined to any one area of human endeavor, as I am by nature inquisitive, and in love with the diversity of the world. They are presented neither chronologically, nor by subject matter, but in an intuitive arrangement that strikes my fancy. In writing them, I moved around in much the same unhampered, free-flowing way, it being a curious world.

CURIOUS WORLD

We Have Nothing to Fear . . .

Fifty years ago, on March 4, 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated president of the United States for the first time, and I was there, in the crowd. (This was the last of the March 4 Inaugurations; ever since, they have taken place on January 20.) I was eighteen, and I drove from college in Baltimore to Washington in a battered Ford owned by a classmate; the mere fact that he owned a four-wheeled vehicle gave him the appearance of being exceedingly rich. The times were desperate. Thirteen million Americans were out of work (including my own father); thousands of families were living in makeshift shacks in our greatest cities; farmers were rioting to prevent foreclosure of their land and homes; hunger was commonplace; and every bank in the nation was about to be closed. I was lucky: I had a scholarship that credited so many hours of work in the library against so much tuition. I was young and healthy and had my share of dreams.

The day was ominously overcast, and became more so as we approached Washington, forty miles south. Thick dark clouds hung over us; I was certain it would rain, and rain heavily. We had no tickets or credentials. The idea was to get as close as possible to the Capitol's East Front, within sight of the Inaugural stand, and find a citizen's perch for the ceremonies. My friend at the wheel knew nothing of the complexities of Washington traffic, and we drove around the city's circles and broad boulevards trying to find a place to park. Soldiers and policemen were everywhere; flags and

bunting hung from every lamppost. But there was no hint of festivity in the air. Small knots of people had begun to line the sidewalks (it was late morning), but for the most part they appeared dispirited and sullen. We parked not very far from the Capitol, on a quiet, tree-lined street with neat, clean row houses with white stoops. It was a poor, black neighborhood. I was dressed for the day in the clothes of the time: a dark-blue vested suit (no jeans, of course), a long dark winter overcoat, and a snappy gray fedora with a huge brim. (The suit, as I recall, was a hideous shade of blue, and had come with two pairs of pants, for thirty-two dollars.) In my pocket I carried binoculars.

We worked our way fairly close to the Capitol before being stopped by a Marine guard. With extreme amiability, he asked for our tickets. He then gave us a friendly wink and pointed at a nearby icicle-laden, leafless tree. My friend and I scrambled into the tree and surveyed the special nexus of the nation that spread out before us. The white dome of the Capitol was gray, partly obscured by wisps of fog. The official grandstand was filling up with top-hatted dignitaries, all bundled up against the expected downpour. There must have been a hundred thousand people spread out over the vast Capitol grounds. For the first time, I examined my neighbors in our particular tree, each on a separate bare limb: an elderly gentleman in rumpled and ancient green tweeds, with patches; a beautiful redheaded young woman wrapped in a skimpy coat of rabbit, or of some other unfortunate domestic animal; a woman of indeterminate age who can best be described as dressed in rags, and whose face was lined with worry and pain. For the moment, at least, we were precariously snug in our tree house, waiting for a president to be inaugurated. President or no president, I had a hard time taking my eyes off the redhead; we subsequently became close friends.

The ceremonies were scheduled to start at noon. Noon came and went. The crowd was strangely silent. One could sense the unease. Rumors began to spread through the crowd, called up to the tree people by the less fortunate groundlings. Rumor: A mob somewhere along Pennsylvania Avenue had broken through police lines and surrounded the car containing President Hoover and President-elect Roosevelt. Rumor: Machine guns had been spotted along the route of the cavalcade from the White House to the Capitol. Rumor: Roosevelt had been wounded by an assassin's bullet, perhaps fatally. The lady in rags prayed quietly in the tree:

"No more trouble, please, God. No more trouble." The man in the patched tweeds said that he had known all along that something terrible was going to happen on this day, and that one man's leaving office and another man's taking over would have no effect: only revolution would turn things right side up, once and for all. Nonsense, said the redhead; have a little faith, and don't fall out of the tree. Suddenly, there was a stirring in the crowd. The red-coated Marine band directly in front of the grandstand began to play. I pulled out my binoculars and focused straight ahead. President Hoover, glum and downcast, appeared and took a seat in a leather armchair to the left of the rostrum. A sound like the rustling of otherworldly leaves went through the crowd. Far away, through the giant center doors of the Capitol, appeared the president-elect. His face was totally without color. He made his way, painfully and slowly, along the ramp leading to the rostrum, leaning heavily on the arm of his son James. He seemed to be drawing on bottomless reservoirs of physical and mental strength to make the short journey to the rostrum and the presidency. The crowd held its collective breath. I doubt whether anybody, at that moment, knew that he was carrying ten pounds of heavy steel around his crippled and wasted legs.

I spotted the white-bearded chief justice, Charles Evans Hughes. He was wearing an odd black skullcap. As he delivered the oath of office, Roosevelt repeated every word of it in frighteningly solemn tones. Once power had passed into his hands, he seized it kinetically, with a vigor and force that stunned the throng. Both hands firmly gripped the rostrum. "This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly," he said, in a clear and unforgettable voice. "This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. . . . Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. . . . Plenty is at our doorstep, but a generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed through their own stub-

bornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and have abdicated. . . . The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. . . . Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. . . . Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This Nation asks for action, and action now. Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. . . . We do not distrust the future of essential democracy. The people of the United States have not failed. . . . They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift, I take it."

The crowd had come to life. It shouted approval. Roosevelt, still holding tightly to the rostrum, gave no sign of satisfaction. His expression was as grim as when he had started to speak. The ceremony was over. "I think we'll live," said the redhead as we climbed down from the tree. The man in tweeds burst into tears. "You know something?" said my college friend. "It never rained."

For many years, I have kept a tattered bulletin board in the kitchen, every inch covered with tacked-up addresses, memos, cards from loved ones, stray quotations from Shakespeare and Yeats (life-sustaining forces). Among them is an old, pockmarked newspaper photograph of F.D.R. leaning on a cane and listening intently to two ragged men who appear to have stopped him somewhere. I have no idea where the picture came from, but it is one of my priceless treasures. One of the men is small and scrappy-looking. His hands are in his pockets, and he is leaning into Roosevelt's face. The other man, larger and older, is wearing an ancient greatcoat, and is unshaved. Roosevelt's gray hat is somewhat smashed. He is being attentive to every word that is being said to him. The caption reads, "He knew how to listen."

Since that far-off inauguration, I have learned that the family Bible on which Franklin Roosevelt took the oath of office lay open to the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians—to "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

(1983)

The Perfect Glow

Oscar Hammerstein II, the lyricist, librettist, and producer, went to the theatre for the first time when he was four years old. He considers the preceding years of his life a total loss. Now a robustly successful showman of fifty-five, Hammerstein recalls his initial glimpse of the mysteries and enticements of the stage with the mixed clarity and fuzziness of the possessed. For the better part of a year, he had been badgering his father, William, or Willie, Hammerstein, to take him downtown from the Hammerstein home, near Mount Morris Park, to see a show. Willie Hammerstein was firmly opposed to the notion. Oscar, he said, should stay home and play with his velocipede. Willie spoke with more than parental authority. He was managing Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre, at Forty-second Street and Seventh Avenue, for *his* father, Oscar Hammerstein I, and he had turned it into the leading variety house of its day. There was no business like show business, Willie conceded, but he was dead set against any offspring of his getting a taste of it. Oscar persisted, however, and one afternoon, in a moment of weakness, Willie succumbed. He took Oscar, by means of a series of trolley cars, to the Victoria to see a matinee performance of a vaudeville show. When Oscar and his father walked into the lobby of the Victoria, his grandfather, a short, squat, determined-looking man with a goatee, was standing beside the box office, scanning the line of ticket buyers. He was wearing a black silk top hat and a black jacket. He had a cigar in his mouth. Willie took Oscar II over to say hello. Oscar I